

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL

**Short Management System
May 28, 2009**



**November 27, 2007
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE RESOURCE ASSESSMENT SECTION
BIRD GROUP**

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL

Scientific Name: (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)

Current (2009) State Status: Species of Special Concern

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) Priority: 3

INTRODUCTION

Although an assessment was written for Leach's Storm-petrels (hereafter LHSP) in 1999, no management activities have occurred because of other species priorities and the fact that there is very little that can be done for this species beyond habitat protection. However, 1 goal and 8 objectives were established by the Seabird Working Group for the planning period 2002 – 2017.

Because of limited personnel and financial constraints, little progress within Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has been made on LHSP management since the assessment was developed and goals and objectives were approved. Current management of these birds in Maine consists primarily of collaborating with conservation partners to monitor populations using the best techniques appropriate to each site. MDIFW lacks the capacity to address these management objectives without additional funds. A logical place to look for monies appropriate for LHSP management is Maine's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) and the Maine Wildlife Action Plan. This species is listed as CWCS Priority 3 species, a relatively low ranking considering Maine has 103 bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SCGN). A Priority 3 classification, in general, means that the species has "a low to moderate potential for state extirpation, yet there are some remaining concerns regarding distribution, status, and/or extreme habitat specialization".

2007 Status

Nearly all of the United States breeding population of LHSP along the Atlantic coast nest on Maine's coastal islands. With increased emphasis on locating petrel colonies, the number of known petrel nesting islands has increased from 17 in 1977 to 35 in 1994-96, with approximately 10,366 nesting pairs. However, because LHSP is a difficult species to census, data are

inadequate to ascertain the current population trend. The LHSP is classified as a Species of Special Concern in Maine.

Habitat protection, although improving, is a primary concern for management of petrel colonies. The viability of many colonies in Maine may be tenuous, due to their small population size. Habitat protection should be extended to currently unoccupied islands with suitable habitat to aid in maintaining or enhancing petrel habitat distribution. Habitat protection, via island acquisition or conservation easement, continues to be a high priority of both governmental and non-governmental conservation organizations in Maine.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and subsequent amendments, authoring the implementation of the various Conventions, provide regulatory authority for the protection and management of the LHSP resource in the United States. Current management of LHSP is the joint responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and MDIFW.

MANAGEMENT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

A goal and 8 objectives for LHSP management were established in 2002 to guide the management of these species through 2017. The goal and objectives were defined through recommendations made to MDIFW by a Seabird Working Group comprised of several representatives of the public and was approved by the Commissioner and the Advisory Council on August 28, 2001.

Goal: Increase the number of Leach's Storm-petrels nesting on the coast of Maine, and increase the publics' awareness and understanding of Maine's nesting seabirds, including Leach's Storm-petrels.

Population Objective 1: With partners, develop by 2004 and implement by 2005, a program to inventory and monitor nesting Leach's Storm-petrels in Maine.

Population Objective 2: By 2010, increase and then maintain through 2017 the number of Leach's Storm-petrel nesting in Maine by 20% from 1995 levels.

Population Objective 3: By 2010, increase and then maintain through 2017, the number of islands from 5 to 10 that support at least 100 nesting pairs.

Population Objective 4: Maintain at least 2 islands with 3,000 nesting pairs of Leach's Storm-petrels through 2017.

Population Objective 5: By 2010, increase and then maintain through 2017 the population of Leach's Storm-petrels at 10 of the smallest colonies from 2020 levels to 25 nesting pairs.

Habitat Objective 1: Increase the number of nesting populations of Leach's Storm-petrels by 5 from 2002 levels by 2017, distributed between Penobscot Bay and downeast Maine.

Habitat Objective 2: By 2005, identify and prioritize sites with suitable habitat for Leach's Storm-petrels and cultivate a relationship with partners and landowners to facilitate management.

Public Outreach Objective: By 2002, develop, expand, and implement, in conjunction with partners, a public outreach plan to promote an understanding and awareness of nesting seabirds, including Leach's Storm-petrels, in Maine.

ASSUMPTIONS

- That USFWS and National Audubon Society (NAS) seabird restoration projects will continue through the planning period.
- That the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and MDIFW will continue to cooperatively manage Great Duck Island and the researchers there.

- That some level of population monitoring will occur through the planning period, particularly on the intensively-managed seabird islands.
- Significant efforts to attain management goals and objectives will require additional staff time and considerable financial resources, none of which are currently available for LHSP management at the present time.
- Nesting colonies consist of discrete nesting islands and current nesting colonies are relatively few, and have been historically. Hence, these few sites will always remain vulnerable to catastrophic events.

MANAGEMENT DECISION PROCESS

None at the present time.

Permit Review Guidelines

Today, protection of LHSP is provided for by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and subsequent amendments. The above agreements prohibited hunting of these birds. Another group with an important role in seabird island regulations is the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC). LURC administers land use planning and zoning responsibilities and thus had regulatory authority over land use planning, zoning, and development activities on a few of these alcid colonies. LURC, in its Comprehensive Plan (section 10.16,C) gives special consideration to seabird islands considered essential to the maintenance of seabird populations. Lastly, many nesting islands receive protection as Significant Wildlife Habitat in Maine's Natural Resource Protection Act of 1988 (NRPA). Under NRPA, no person may perform any activity listed in subsection 2 without first obtaining a permit from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP).

Part II: Leach's Storm-petrel Data Base

Population Monitoring

A number of census techniques used to estimate nesting LHSP and their population trends have been tested in Maine, with varying levels of success. Which technique used, or combination of techniques, depends on the objectives of the project, the desired reliability, and available money, time, and personnel. The reader is encouraged to review the following paper for a description of LHSP census methods: Nettleship 1976. Census techniques for seabirds of arctic and eastern Canada. Occasional Paper No. 25. Canadian Wildlife Service.

Databases

The **Seabird Island Database** (MS Access application), located in Bangor with WRAS on the Bangor GIS server (Brm-fgb1svgissv) is accessible in Bangor, Augusta, and in the Regions. This application enables the viewer to browse/edit/query data in four tables; Island Seabird Census, Seabird Nesting Island, Island Registry, and Seabird List.

Island Seabird Census (ICENSUS and ICDATA table) contains census data for island-nesting seabirds, wading birds, and some waterfowl. The baseline for this database is Carl Korschgen's 1976-77 coast-wide inventory data. The database primarily contains annual surveys by MDIFW. However, it also includes inventory data and observations from a variety of reliable sources (e.g. NAS, Maine Audubon Society, USFWS, College of the Atlantic, and Gulf of Maine Seabird Working Group participants, etc. This database currently contains 8940 records. **Seabird Nesting Island** (SNI table) is a yearly summary of Island Census (ICENSUS). For each island tracked in SNI, there is a record with the best estimate of nesting population for noted census year. This database includes 623 records. **Island Registry** (ISLDREG table) contains descriptive information for islands in the coast of Maine. Individual island identifiers (island registry numbers) provide links to MEGIS layers. This table contains 5,638 records. Lastly, **Seabird List** contains alpha codes and common and scientific names for birds referenced in

Island Seabird Census. This table contains 55 records. Population and habitat data for LHSP may eventually be tracked in the ET/SC database. That decision has not been made at this time.

